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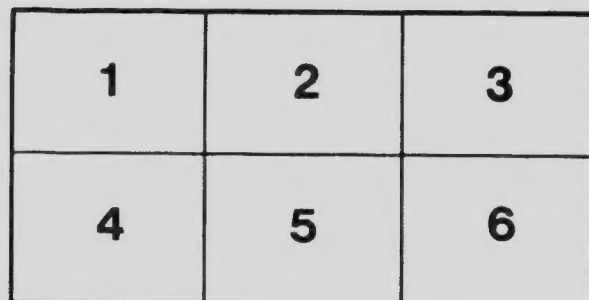
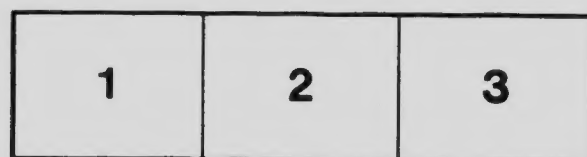
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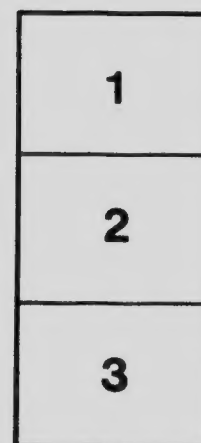
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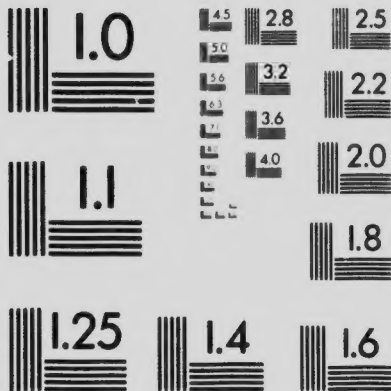
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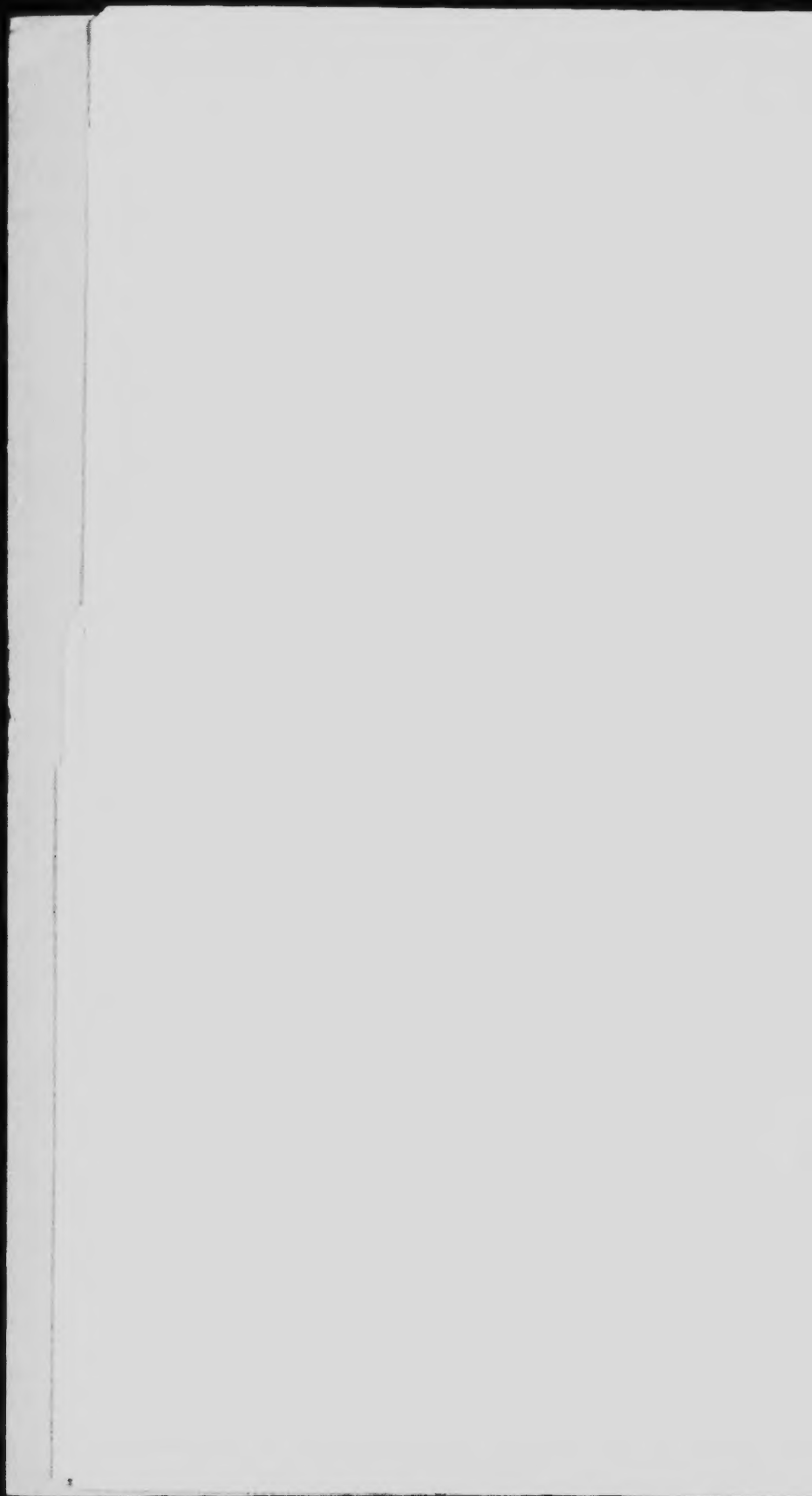


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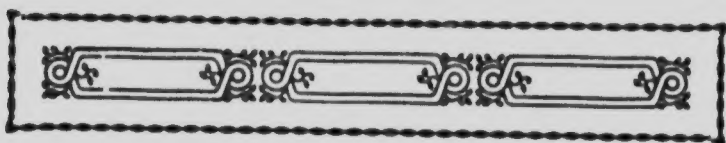
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CHAPTER 1

I am sorry that for the time being I have forgotten the authoress name of the work entitled "Mud Puddles." I shall always remember however some particulars of the scientific report which the production contained relative to her analysis of human nature. Therein she declared that no constituent ingredients of any known mixtures ever equalled those which had been poured and stirred into the batter of human composition. By the way when I come to think of what I know about the consequent natural disposition of some folks, (the other fellows) I am not going to enter into any sort of a controversy, that would indicate a denial on my part as to those claims inferred. Aside from admitting any specific undue effects from such a cause in my own case, I am not above saying that I too have not been immune from frequent spasmodic changes in (though but congenial demonstrative) moods, and temperment, such as may have been the effects of some such an inherent cause.

For example it happened some time ago as I was deeply exercised in a serious reminiscent reverie, that there kept ringing in my ears certain sentiments which are contained in a few poetical stanzas composed by Thomas Moore, entitled, "Oft in the Stilly Night."

Oft in the stilly night,
Ere slumber's chain hath bound me,
Fond memory brings the light
Of other days around me,
The smiles, the tears,
Of boyhood's years,
The words of love then spoken,

The eyes that shone,
 Now dimmed and gone,
 The cheerful hearts now broken.

When I remember all
 The friends so linked together,
 I've seen around me fall
 Like leaves in winter weather,
 I feel like one
 Who treads alone,
 Some banquet hall deserted, etc. etc.

How clearly do I remember in recalling that event how that during that soliloquy of many ever revered memories, I had become entranced with delight as I imagined that I was once again hiding behind a venerable old stump which was just outside of our garden gate, impatiently waiting to spring a sudden surprise to my mother, who was coming slowly down the path toward me. I also remember, how in turn, I gave vent on the other hand to deep, upheaving emotions of sorrow as I wept bitter tears of the most profound grief as many adverse scenes, which then came before me, had inspired. Eventually when that state of alternate joy, and grief, had subsided in the more calm moments of reflection, I began to apply certain appropriate inferences which are contained in the poetical interrogations of "Would We Return?" by Robert Burns Wilson, as a soothing balm to my case, namely:

Would we return?
 If once the gates which closed upon the past
 Were opened wide for us, and if the dear
 Remembered pathway stretched before us clear
 To lead us back to youth's lost land at last,
 When on Life's April shadows lightly cast,
 Recalled the old sweet days of childish fear
 With all their faded hopes, and brought anear
 The faroff streams with which our skies were glassed;
 Did these lost dreams which make the soul's sad yearning
 But live once more and waited our returning,
 Would we return?

And then though almost unconsciously I at least indirectly replied in the affirmative to that impressive

query by attempting to adjust some sort of a pliable tune to those familiar words of yore, namely:

Backward, flow backward, O tide of the years,
I am so weary of toil and of tears,
Toil without recompense, tears all in vain,
Take them and give me my childhood again
Backward, turn backward, O Time in your flight,
Make me a child again, just for tonight!
Mother,—come back from the echoless shore,
Take me again to your heart as of yore.

And then, strange as it may seem, it appeared to me in that sacred hour as if though the dial of time had been actually turned back and that I had thus really become once more a child at my mother's home. It would indeed fill many volumes of import to describe in detail all that was contained in that realistic review as such concerned even those days of my early childhood. We can therefore at the best give but a brief outline of the most prominent incidents in connection therewith owing to the limited space assigned this particular treatise. Before so doing however it is incumbent upon me to make in this connection a public confession, humiliating though it be, of some important matters bearing indirectly upon the introductory phase of the succeeding juvenile account.

Let it be known therefore, hereby, that some time ago I began the dictation of a certain manuscript with a view of having it comply to the title, that of, "I Came, I Saw, I Conquered." To my surprise in reviewing some time later what I had then dictated, I awoke to the fact that I had actually failed to recognize in any way whatsoever the purport of the first clause contained therein, namely that boasting phrase, announcing the fact, that "I Came!"

Whether (aside from some folks who I know full well, who have often wished that I had never come) anyone else ever cared whether I had showed up or not, the fact remained that that declaration had been a part of my subject and therefore was due to be dealt

with, in some one manner or another, to say the least. Furthermore whatever the important message was which I had intended to fix up so as to attract the attention of an unconcerned public to such vital matters, it should have appeared in the very beginning of the work, should it, or should it not? thought I, in my dilemma at that time. It was as important that I should know as it had been for Charles Dickens, to have decided as to whether it had been the kettle, or the cricket upon the hearth, that had started that racket in the kitchen, which he made so much ado about in his report thereof, facts well known to all lovers of good books.

Turn it, whichever way I would, the result was inevitable. That title had to be supplanted that time by a makeshift substitute.

It never dawned upon me however, when in my stupidity just recently in connection with this affair, as I rummaged and ransacked all sorts of drawers, shelves, and waste baskets to find that relegated document once more, that if I should ever presume to refer to that same perverse clause which pretended to enlighten the world as to my coming, that it would lead me into the same kind of a predicament as it had before. The serious difficulty which had been and still is involved in connection therewith, is the fact that of all the information which I myself have ever had relative to the important declaration that I came, is very meagre. It is indeed so limited, dense and obscure that all that I can possibly produce in reference thereto is about as intelligible as that which is contained in the sentiments expressed in the endless repetition of the single phrase included in all the stanzas, and their respective chorus, of the old familiar political song, entitled, "We're Here, Because We're Here." It is sung to the tune of

"We Won't Go Home Till Morning," or "John Brown's Baby Had a Thistle in its Toe," namely:

We're here because we're here because we're here be-
cause we're here—(repeat)

We're here because we're here because we're here be-
cause we're here

Chorus

We're here because we're here because we're here be-
cause we're here

Repeat

2nd Stanzas Etc. Etc. Etc.

It was owing to my fathers' death shortly after my birth, and the removal of our family from that part of the country, that I never had anything more than an imaginary conception of the home and its environments where I was said to have been born. Consequently I can but form the basis of the following statistical account in reference to my authentic juvenile biography, as such had been engraved upon the tablets of my utopian conjecture, after the manner as inferred. Fictitious shading, supporting and artistically decorating whatever connections may have to be employed in order that the story may be respectively hung together, are of course permissible under such particular provocational circumstances.

It is unfortunate, yet nevertheless true, that as far as I have been able to learn, no ancestral pedigree of distinction, and note, has been perpetuated relative to our family history, a sad neglect somewhere on the part of my ancestors. Little chance now of my ever trying to conjure up a legal claim when a lost fortune such as I have been looking for will turn up.

Since we are however equal for all such emergencies as above intimated, let it hereby be known that times without number, I had thought that I could see very clearly in the distance, in a particular district in the country, a slender girl of about fourteen years of age, on a dusty public highway, and that I

could still hear the echo of a Hoo! Hoo! Hoo! Hoo! call by her as she was proceeding on her way to the district school. That seemed to be followed by a "Come over here, Fatty, I have something to tell you. Hustle up! I'll surprise you, depend on that."

Presently, so I imagined, a stout lassie was seen coming around the bend of the crossroad, stooped over and holding her side, gasping for breath because of her hurried response to her companions call. In times she was able to say, "well, what has happened that you have made such a fuss about? Tell me quick is it anything serious? Has anybody been killed?"

By way of response, I thought I saw the slender girl shrugging up her shoulders, giggling and gestulating indications of glee, as she rolled up the whites of her eyes, and repeatedly declared, that it was worse than that.

"Well, tell me," came the response. "Don't keep me in suspense like this."

"I'll tell you if you'll promise me faithfully," came the reply, upon the honor of your word, that you won't tell a living soul, for I had to swear like that upon a stack of Bibles and cross my heart to my sister this morning, that I would not tell. Not because there is any danger of the news not spreading like wildfire all over this community, but my sister don't want it said that she was the first one to tattletale, you see?"

Of course, on the spur of the moment, under the excitement, Fatty promised that it should remain an absolute secret with her. Having been thus tied up with those same sacred bonds for an everlasting mum upon that subject, Betsey confided in her by saying that some time during the previous day, a stranger had arrived at farmer B. C.'s house with claims that he had official rights as a legal heir to stay, and bunk it there, whether or no.

"Ha! Ha! Ha," is that all you have to tell me after all the hullabaloo that you have made of it, came the reply. "I thought that you were really going to tell me something worth while. However, Ha! Ha! Another to add to the raft of young 'uns those folks have already, and a boy at that, did you intimate? Well, well, what are they good for?"

It is safe to say that before that day was over, and each confidential disclosure around the circle of schoolmates had been rehearsed that many points of note, either good, bad or indifferent, had been ascribed to that unfortunate child. I should not be surprised to have learned that among other things that had been said someone should have declared as having heard that that child was born with bear's feet, a misunderstanding, of being told that he had perhaps arrived without shoes or stockings on, as feet were made first, and at that to paddle in the mud.

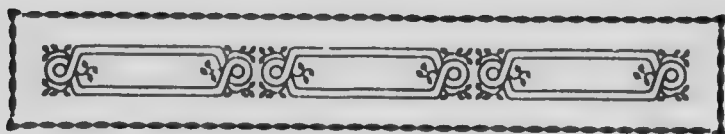
Perhaps the old superstition was again revived by some of the smaller children, how that all good babies are let down from Heaven above. There is not wanting any amount of insulting evidence by living witnesses to this day, to testify to the fact that the disposition of that particular kid, was such as to make it sure that he was not one that was ever let down from heaven above.

Thus from the very day of my public debut upon this earthly stage of action, it became evident that this is a cold world to come to, to wade, and elbow one's way through the surging crowds, given to all kinds of impudence, and sorts of lip imaginable.

In submitting gracefully to what had thus proved the inevitable decree in reference to those important matters which have now been so intelligently set forth, there is one consolation in the fact that "I came," on the only date in the year, that is of suffi-

cient importance to induce any new comer to stay permanently. It is noteworthy because on that day the ringing echo of the tramp, tramp, tramp, of all loyal "Orangemen," are heard everywhere, and furthermore because Julius Caesar, as well was born on the twelfth day of July, "Hurrah! Hurrah!!"

to stay
that day
o, of all
and fur-
born on
!"



CHAPTER 2

Never shall I forget how after many years of a service of awful conflict upon the great battlefield of life, time had become phenomenally reversed and afforded me a duplication of my childhood period as declared in a previous connection. As to my appreciation of those sacred experiences.

You may tell in flowing language of your grand ances-
tral halls,
Where the glint of golden sunshine in its splendor ever
falls;
And recite to me the story of the greatness of your clan;
They who wore the royal purple as the royal only can,
But your story will not turn me from the visions of my
youth;
Gilded glories cannot tempt me from the paths of simple
truth.
Rather than your storied towers, oh, I wish that you
might see
My childhood's charming castle—home sweet home—at
mother's knee.

Well might I have repeated with Jane Taylor,
referring to the nursery quarters in that dear old
home.

Who fed me from her gentle breast,
And hushed me in her arms to rest,
And on my cheeks sweet kisses pressed
My Mother

Who sat and watched my infant head,
When sleeping on my cradle bed,
And tears of sweet affection shed
My Mother

When sleep forsook my open eye,
Who was it sang sweet Lullaby,
And rocked me that I should not cry
My Mother

When pain and sickness made me cry,
Who gazed on me with heavy eye,
And wept for fear that I should die,
My Mother

Who ran to help me when I fell,
And would some pretty story tell,
Or kiss the place to make it well,
My Mother

One of the very first incidents in my life still recorded upon the tablets of my memory is that of my having been seated upon a woodpile near the barn with a whip in hand, driving an imaginary team of real horses. I remember how I ordered a "Get up there Bill and Fan," a gee and haw, and a back-up, etc.

I also clearly remember how I used to wonder in those days, why everybody did not come to live with us, for there certainly was not another home like ours, or a mother like mine. Would you know that the world was very small at that time? From the brow of the hill in front of our garden gate looking to the east, just beyond Shupe's bush, and to the north of Miller's swamp, Hallman's school house in the west, and Wilkinson's farm on the south, the horizon of the vaulted skies encircled everything that was then created. In fact, my mother was really the centre, and the circumference of all the world.

Aside from our pantry, its long shelves, always loaded with goodies too numerous to mention, our beds, for instance, were made for solid comfort. Rope springs and straw ticks, if you please, which whenever they had been emptied, washed and refilled, invariably defied one to dig, and wriggle, and snuggle down sufficient to remain in bed the first night or two. But oh, when once you were master of the situation and lost under the spreads of downy feathers, it taxed the skill of even the wandering ghosts which used to roam about those days, to suspect one's whereabouts.

Upon one occasion, my sister and I had been placed on the bench by the window with specific instructions to remain seated there until mother had finished

scrubbing the kitchen floor. A disregard of those orders by myself as I slipped, slid and sprawled in a daring attempt to cross to somewhere, occasioned the only gentle slap that I remember of ever receiving from my mother. There was however, at least one other mode of punishment in vogue, in case of any serious transgressions by us junior members. Whatever tramps were ever made for, or wherever they came from, unless from Miller's Swamp, that was always a mystery. It was enough to know, however, that tramps there were, and that come they would whether or no. The only relief of the situation when any suspicious persons approached the premises, due to an instilled fear that they should have us, soul and body, because of some act of disobedience, as above inferred, was for my sister and myself to hide under the bed upstairs behind the rail curtains, which were all the style at that time, and to remain there until assured that it was safe to come forth.

One day I was not so fortunate however. Having been engaged with some trinkets on the verandah, as mother and my sister passed by on their way to the barn, I said, "I will come in a minute." Alas! That minute was fraught with the most serious consequences. They had just disappeared when lo, I heard footsteps. Could it be a tramp! came the flash of fear, like a thunderbolt from a clear midday sky, and sure as you live, it was, and at that, a most hideous looking being. I did not dare to pass him for a run to the barn, so I bolted inside the door, slid under the bench at the end of the table, there with my face towards the wall, I held my breath in suspense as to the consequence.

Whatever the motive of the action was, I do not know, but at any rate, the tramp flopped into a sitting posture on that same bench, but in much less time than it takes to tell it, I scrambled through under the table

and flew out of an open window, which was about six feet above ground, screaming "Murder!" until I was embraced by mother, who came to my rescue. My hair, which was very long at that time, gave evidence of a possible reversal of the laws of gravitation under extreme provocation, as I, like Fairy Goldie Locks (who providentially escaped from the bears,) had fled for refuge.

Another incident which had been indelibly imprinted in my childish mind and which experience was again reproduced during the strange rehearsal of that period, was to infer briefly as follows: I was startled by being awakened early one morning to find everybody excited, and hustling to obey my brother's orders to follow him to some notable doings of some kind. No time was allowed to dress beyond what the law demands in a civilized country, as the procession was forming and about to receive orders to march. Several nearby neighbor boys, and all members of our family (mother excepted) were soon in line following each other Indian fashion, to the thick woods at the rear of mother's potato patch, "There he is! There he is!" shouted first one and then another. "Oh, yes, I see him," came the response from different quarters.

Suffice it is to say that right at the edge of the woods upon a big limb of a large tree, a wild animal was apparently attempting to hide safely from the searching eyes of any cruel hunter that might perchance be spying around. Such a fear or presentiment was not without a cause, from the fact that my brother, that cruel, heartless wretch, had carried something in his hands, which I later on learned to have been a very treacherous gun. In time, after everybody had been ordered to be very quiet, that gun roared at that animal with a voice that evidently scared him, from the fact that he tremblingly lost his bal-

ance, and rolled the limb, and came plunging head first right towards us. There was some tall scrambling amongst the spectators to avoid a collision with the monster as he descended. As for myself, I thought it an act of coming to take revenge for having disturbed him. In time, however, I stroked very gently his smooth fur, speaking words of sympathy and sincere regret for his misfortune, as he lay stretched out in mute form before us. Hot tears chased one another down my cheeks, as I petted him, and admired his beauty, since his fluffy tail was actually strung with rings of different hues, and colors.

Later on in life, I concluded that that poor fellow had been a victim of suspicion and came to a sad end and a premature grave, because of circumstantial evidence as to his having been guilty of a serious crime, the punishment of which having evidently been the death penalty. However, since he had been supposed to have trespassed upon Mr. Bock's corn patch, an awful offence, as I learned, what else could he therefore have expected. I was very sorry indeed when I was first informed that that was an hereditary failing of the whole tribe of racoons.

I wondered if perhaps it was a fulfillment of sacred warning that the sins of the parents should be punished in some manner unto the third and fourth generations, for certainly to have such a tendency was a curse to any progeny. I thought too that the moral of that incident was implied in that admonition, that if sinners entice thee, consent thou not, and further more thou shalt not covet anything that is thy neighbors, not even his corn patch, etc.

Among the many attractions presented to me as I again roamed hither and thither through the neighboring woods and meadows as in days of yore, were certain honeycombed sections in the fields, where small

mounds of earth stood sentinels at the entrances of many subterranean tunnels, the rendezvous of whole squadrons of groundhogs. By the way, when I come to think of it, the more aristocratic cast among them consisting of the smart set of the upper crust, insisted on being distinguished as woodchucks. That designated title signified that their social rating was entirely above all intermediate, and lower stratas.



I chanced to arrive at one of those royal gateway during the time that the chief of one of those tribe or clans, returned from a morning stroll, as I took it from the hubub and rumpus which he stirred up just because I was standing too near for his royal highness to pass by without becoming defiled, in coming into too close a contact with myself, an evident despised foreign intruder.

Someone had the nerve to say that I had been scared of that fellow. Would you ever have thought it. The insult! Upon what grounds such a supposition

could ever have been made that is an enigma, for I am sure that I never in this wide world, owned up to such cowardice in that matter. No, not I!

What I do contend for however is, that we, the parties in question, had a terrible set-to, although it is not an honorable confession to make in saying that one could not pass a stranger whom they had never met before, without insulting him. However, it was some controversy we had, I can assure you. The subject was relative to the legal possessions of those domains. I, on the one hand, contending that there should be some stipulated tax revenue provided for by such roving bands as they were, to their benefactors instead of their setting up a gorilla warfare to sustain the assumed rights of a free subsistence upon Christian charity, such as their manner of life persisted in.

Unfortunately, I was not sufficiently versed in law to offset my opponent's arguments relative to holdings by squatting, or the fact, that possession was nine points of the law in favor of the defendant.

For once I found one that was true to his convictions, standing for the same through thick and thin, and that not without chattering his teeth and demonstrating his self-efficiency as he strutted about, that he had spunk enough to fight for his rights to the very last ditch. I venture to say that it was specifically stipulated in their creed and catechism, and taught in Chuck Sunday school, that the law of self-preservation was one of their fundamental principles, and chief duties.

Another minor incident which may be noted in passing, was the fact that during my strange review of youthful career, I heard again as oft before, that same old bullfrog's voice in a nearby pond, seven octaves lower than that of any or all of his kith and

kin, about him, in their delightful bedlam. He seemed to be forever growling, and grouching about being crowded, and liable to be pushed off the log, so thought.

Then once again did I imagine that gently led by mother's hand, we went to the meeting house as it was called, which, by the way, was just a few rods distant adjoining mother's own property. Imagine a wee boy clamped in a vice of cast iron rules, that of being seated beside his mother, for two or three long hours upon a high, hard board bench, without permission to wink, or move hand or foot.

In church, that one at least, one was supposed to sit very quiet and to draw a long sober face, because do you know? that was a sure sign of true humility and sincere devotion.

One of the adherents of that faith, a good Brother S—, was an inveterate user of chewing tobacco. Since he did not find it convenient, for certain reasons, to be forever masticating in church, as was his custom in general, he was therefore of course excused from invariably having instead, a good long snooze. Fortunately, he was always awakened by the singing of the Doxology, and thus Brother S— was a good example to all poor sinners around, as a regular attendant at that particular church service, which fortunately or otherwise, only convened once a month, or twelve times annually.

Once upon a time during that period I suddenly spied three of the most beautiful black, and white striped kittens, that you could imagine, in a near open field. They were evidently, thought I, pretending that "London bridge" was falling down, playing some such familiar game. O! how I hustled to make their acquaintance, and to invite them

come and live with us. Alas, they too were of the snubby kind, thinking it beneath their dignity to associate with the likes of me.

It was fortunate that they retreated as gracefully as they did, and more especially just when they did, because I only had one suit of rompers and if they would have had to be buried for a week, it would have meant, bed for mine.

It was amusing to see everyone about sniffing the air, and frequently pinching their nose for some reason or other, for days and days, thereafter.

There is another matter which I have been tempted to (and am now yieldy to) disclose in passing, although I admit that it is not an honorable thing so to do. However, it has often been proved that it is better for one to make an open confession than to be forever grouching and harboring an ill-feeling against another.

With such an incentive I just want to get even with one who was the cause of creating such a wrangling feeling in my heart. Perhaps my accusations are against the very one whom you would least expect should ever be brought on the carpet for reproof of any sort whatsoever.

Be all that as it may, regardless of the honor which the public has always conferred upon him, and the notoriety which he has gained, that same Santa Claus is often very partial, and two-faced.

This is not all heresay, for although one is classed as a tattletale to tell things out of school, you won't blame me, I'm sure, for squealing on a fellow that is not above putting one over on a good boy, such as he did to me on one occasion.

Instead of presenting me with something due such a distinguished boy, what do you think he did? Well, whether you are inclined to believe it or not,

although my stockings had been hung up, and my plate set for his convenience, all that he left me was a corn cob, after all that was good had been munched off, and a rotten apple.

That settled me with Santa, whatever you may think of him.

Never again will I have any truck with him, nor any of his junk left for me.

I have not met him for a long time.

Perhaps he has a hunch that I would not be seen in his company, or walking on the same side of the street

As in days of my youth, I also seemed to see again that the peewee family still had peaceful possession of their summer residence on our main verandah. There, within reach of anyone on the front of the house, near the main entrance, was the specifically bounded site for which a clear title for ninety-nine years to come, had evidently been secured by the ancestors of that tribe to build their home, and honorably perpetuate their race.

It had been doubtless away back at the time when our house had been first built in pioneer days, many many peewee generations previous, when all the stipulations in reference thereto had been legally drawn up, signed, witnessed, sealed and delivered to all parties concerned.

That title in all probability, had been handed down as a legacy to the first born of each succeeding generation. It had been said, and I have many reasons to believe that it was true, that they had as well, a somewhat similar home somewhere in the Sunny South which they occupied during the cold season of our northern clime within the bounds of Latitude 41 north, Longitude 85 west. Thus, year after year, always on or about the same date, late in autumn, dic

they bid adieu and leave after many public gatherings and farewell banquets had all been duly observed, for their semi-annual tour south. The same was true in reference to their return as regards stated times in the early spring, then after the sessions of public Thanksgiving services for safe return, had been rendered, and after meeting with their kind for social intercourse had been finally dispensed with, all preparations for a general house cleaning, or the rebuilding of the nest, as the case may have demanded was in order.

We always took great delight to see each succeeding brood, usually about four in number, cuddled together, perched on a clothesline near by, for a night or two, after they had been forced out of the nest by their unkind mother.

I learned with sorrow in later years, that misfortune of the most tragical nature had befallen that honored and ever esteemed family. It appears, as I was informed that on what proved to have been their last pilgrimage from the South, that they had evidently fallen into the hands of some ruffians by the way, who not satisfied with plucking most of their victims, smooth feathers, had in addition, inoculated their tiny bodies with some pestiferous southern lice. As a consequence, their beautiful home, in spite of all their efforts to clean and decorate the same as on former occasions, soon on account of their unwelcome associates, became uninhabitable. To assist them in their sad plight, my sympathetic mother rendered such service as she in her judgment thought would prove the best means for their restoration. That in time, meant the entire destruction of their beautiful palace, and the institution of some system of spraying of disinfectant liquids upon even the members of that family as well. That treatment proved a success and in time, a new structure had been under way, well

towards completion, as a result of many days and long hours of hard work, by those faithful workers, when alas! suddenly, and unexpectedly, a much more serious calamity overtook them.

One of those mates unfortunately did not observe that a window in the barn had been closed and thus in darting against a pane, as a supposed opening, sustained its fatal blow. Days, and weeks, were then spent by the surviving member in plaintive calls and a diligent search for his former lover. Perhaps, that plea implied that if peradventure its absence had been due to any supposed unkindness on the part of the one who was then mourning, that there would certainly be a willingness to make any sort of a concession towards a reconciliation and unity. Alas! All such pleadings were in vain, and in time, that beckoning voice too was no longer heard, for it had as well become silent in death. That sweet-heart succumbed, no doubt, to the grip of melancholia, and a broken heart.

One phase of that last noted incident lends some little shade of truth to an accusation of disrespect for some of our Southern neighbors, in what I either read, or dreamt, or imagined, was true concerning a statement supposed to have been made by Bridget Flaherty. She, so I had it, had interviewed Father O'Regan upon one occasion upon a very important matter, namely, as to whether or not, by any hook or crook, any of those Southerners would ever be allowed to cross the threshold of the Gates of Heaven. The answer, it was said, had been in the affirmative, and to that, Bridget replied, that where ever those folks were given liberty to congregate, whether in heaven above, the earth beneath, or the waters under the earth, from that place she wished to be excused. They would lie, cheat and ridicule

one even in heaven, she declared, because it was an hereditary failing of theirs, and that therefore they couldn't help it. They would swear falsely, even though the truth would serve them better.

However, if what the Universalists claim, is true, namely, that everybody will eventually get to heaven, in that case, Poor Bridget would, whether or no, have to put up with it, I suppose. I imagine that even if Universalists would accede to the claim of some relative to there being a Broadway in life, tending downward, morally, and a narrow way leading upward, spiritually, that they would consider that from a scientific standpoint, those roads would form a complete circle in time uniting at the same terminus. That is a very comforting tenet to such as can embrace it without any if's or and's, p's or q's attached, and would be about as assuring and comforting as that which was implied in the Dutchman's declaration when he said that two of his geese "came home missing."

That, by the way, reminds me of a true incident which occurred in a little village in the East some years ago. At its main crossroads was a large, sprawling, primitive tavern, almost as old as the Canadian hills. It was surprising how that it had stood there in spite of all the bombs, and fiery darts which had been hurled against it, from the pulpit of a Methodist Church close by. It was an awful eyesore, was that tavern, to the few folks who represented about the ten per cent. minority of that community.

In time, a new preacher had arrived in town and in looking about to see what might be accomplished in that parish, such as would accrue to his credit, he spied that old tavern, with disgust, and everyone connected with the running of its notorious affairs. Consequently that was one thing that was

to be attended to, the nailing up of the doors of that place, in short order. After a great deal of ammunition had been exploded however, and the gust of the furious onslaught had made no perceptible impression, he, that preacher, determined to meet the proprietor of that institution, face to face, and tell him what the consequence would be if he persisted in that particular course of life. "See if I won't," said he.

The opportune time soon came one morning, and if so be that that unfortunate hotelkeeper had not heard a sermon for a long time, concerning the awful doom which awaits anyone who deals in intoxicating liquors, he heard one that morning in no uncertain sound, (regardless of the fact of having a license to do so provided by the majority of the good citizens of the community). After listening attentively until the preacher had said everything that he could rake up upon the subject, and had been entirely run down, his opponent took the floor, "Now look here, Mr. Preacher" said he, "there is no use of us being at loggerheads about a matter of so little importance as all that, as friends and neighbors. Your one-sided ideas may appear as logical to you old fashioned Methodists, but, I being as well a religious man, with a more modern revised creed, am thereby fortunately, more correctly informed about those matters. The facts of the case are, that whereas you preach for your bread and butter, I, on the other hand, for mine, serve the public with refreshing drinks, but in the end it will be all the same, since I, as a Universalist, can see where we will all get to Heaven, in the sweet bye and bye."

The preacher having been beat up, declared in a public speech which I heard him deliver, some time later, that he told that man in plain English,

face to face, yes, he threw it in his teeth, that since the Scripture declared "Woe to him if he did not preach the gospel," and a woe to him on the other hand that putteth the bottle to his neighbors lips, "that such being the case, there would inevitably, be a hell! of a difference between the two in the end."

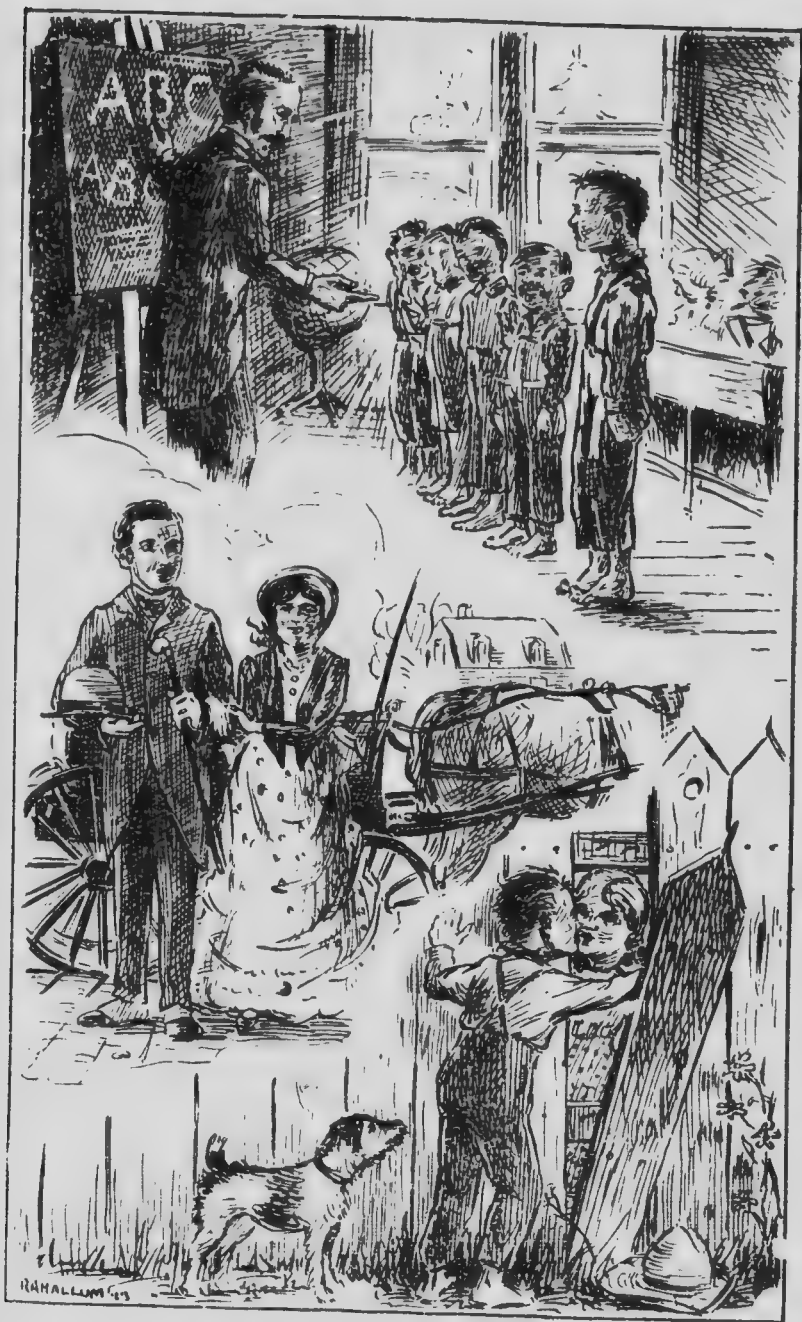
P.S. The doors of that tavern had not been nailed up as yet, the last time that I passed that way.

Among the thousand and one special objects, scenes and incidents, which were then again beheld and experimentally duplicated in the home of my childhood, there was included as well a visit to the antiquated little country schoolhouse, in the distance. There was the hallowed spot where I first toed the chalk line when a mere lad, and when I very forcibly (ouch) learned the use of a long, sharp pointer, aside from that of indicating which of those scrawling things upon the blackboard was A, and which was B or C. Apparently my artist's conception as well was to the effect that those had been very knotty problems for me to solve, so much so, that he indicated that it had been a strain on my whole nervous system. Aside from a twisting, and warping, of my normal graceful profile, it appears it had especially affected my squinty eyebrows, threatening fist, and defiant toes. In fact, there had been an evident recruiting and reinforcement of all the reserved confederates of my whole being, to enable me to honorably hold my ground, and master the situation to my credit.

All that I have to say in rebuttal is that whether intentionally or otherwise, the artist permitted me to pose at the wrong end of the line. I am surprised that the rest of the gang did not object, since I have never before stood at the head

I esteem it an honor to be thus represented. I admit, this being the proper connection I think to throw out a hint, that even if I had ever owned up to the truth, which I never did, and never shall, that I had always remained the principal dunce of that school, that would not have appeared too bad at that, from the fact that the rest of that bunch were a very bright and intelligent lot. Mind you! that although it was seven long miles to the nearest railroad, some of them claimed that they had actually seen the cars.

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The Dunce

Levi and His Bride

Mary Ann Never Revealed the Secret of the Loose
Picket in Hailman's Fence, Bless Her Heart

Levi, an illustrious example for instance, who was also an intimate chum of mine, unfortunately forgot what the particular kind of candies were called that he wanted for his sweetheart, one day as he was in the village, consequently he designated Conversation Lozenges as Reading Things, as he pointed to the show case, however he was not fourteen years old yet, when that occurred, which accounts for that. Levi, although an overgrown sort of a lummax with a loose-jointed, sloppy gait, was with one exception, fairly good looking. That exception was the fact that his mouth had been set up a little higher than is customary, consequently, the laws of gravitation were more effective upon his lower physiognomy, which always seemed to me to have made it more difficult for him to keep his big mouth closed.

The last time that I saw Levi, he had just returned from a whole day's honeymoon trip. He had married a wee, tiny, little widow, old enough to be his mother.

At one time Levi had contracted some sort of a contagious religious mania. During the few weeks which that lasted, his whole talk had been about Heaven, what a grand place it was and how nice it would be when he got there. Judging from all that he had to say to me, the last time that I saw him concerning his courtship, honeymoon and darling wife, I think that Heaven would not have been in it, with the delight of a newly wed season, while it lasted.

Among many other worthy qualifications, and notes of distinction in my own case, such as might be mentioned had I time to do so, and space, in this biography, was that of my efficiency as a base ball athlete. I still remember, how that whenever

I took the bat, all the fielders would hustle in toward the home base, and even those on the diamonds would move in, all forming a small circle. Nuf said! to expert players.

Mrs. Perrybingle, so Charles Dickens, that tattletale, informs us, was subject to losing her temper at times, or laying it down somewheres where it was hard to pick up again. Since I just incidentally recalled that information in this appropriate connection, I might say softly, on the side, strictly confidential to you remember, that regardless of the fact that Mary Ann Rush had a temper too, and at that one corresponding with the sharp flash in her piercing fiery eyes, there was something about Mary Ann that I always admired. Perhaps it was because she used to single me out upon every available opportunity from all the rest of that gang of boys, for a little confidential chat by the way. In time (if you want to know) her large irregular teeth, prominent cheek bones, and all her freckles, became real beauty spots to my conception of things. Those of course are matters of taste, personal likes and dislikes, though alas! liable to change to suit the whims of Cupid's bow, one's lucky star, or providential fate.

P.S. I came very near omitting entirely a matter of importance which I had intended to emphasize, namely, the fact that I often wished to secure a consensus of reliable public opinion as to why Mary Ann always conferred the honor upon me, in her pick from a shuffling crowd. Though not casting any reflections upon the other poor fellows, I can't help thinking that there was a special cause for such effects, since Mary Ann, like Levi, was always admired for her good judgement. Those were the happy days!

As to the period of junior school life, that no doubt, contains, owing to the nature of its universal application, some features more or less common to all, such as are contained, for instance in the key-note of the rhymes designated "'Calling the Roll,'" by John D. Wells.

In his fancy's magic spell,
As he was dozing by the kitchen fire,
He saw rosy young 'uns legging off towards
Gage's district school.
Said he, "I seem to see 'em gather there,
And hear the morning bell,
Tinkling in the frosty room,
And then through all the years that's vanished
Ada Rhinehart calls the roll."

Angelina Abinger, Tom Allen, Herbert Ames,
How memory just fairly glows
At them familiar names,
Abner Burke, Elisha Bond,
Bud Burke, loud and clear,
Through the chambers of my memory,
Each young 'un answers "Here."

Martin Crough was next in line,
Ol' fat and freckled Mart,
Lord had to make him extra big
To hold his bulgin' heart,
Lemuel Dawson, Hirman Grigs,
And Hiram's brother Bunt,
Bessie Sykes, and Mary Burks,
And Iispin' Telda Fetch,
Who pulled her braid enduring Roll
And always answered "Yeth."

Through my dreams they answered "Here,"
Well, not exactly all,
For some of them are answering
The Heavenly Teacher's call.

It would fill many volumes of import to give all the specific accounts of that which enters into even a few years of early childhood life. Recalling for instance a particular phase of events such as I have thus far omitted seems like tracing with a keen edge instrument, the outlines of many scars of once deep wounds. For instance, I shall never forget two older brothers bidding an affectionate

farewell early one morning, to mother, myself and a younger sister, emphasizing their purpose of returning from their intended vacation in two weeks.

Many exciting scenes followed some ten days latter, as different messengers came to interview my mother concerning very important matters such as I did not understand, beyond a sense that Mother had been plunged into a state of deep sorrow, and intense grief.

I well remember however, that precisely two weeks, as I was informed, from the date that my brothers had left home that during an hour of great excitement in the family, I heard sleigh bells in the distance, then saw the approach of a team of black horses in a sleigh, and two men sitting in the front part thereof, one of them I recognized as my eldest brother, but the other man was an entire stranger. My inquisitiveness relative to my younger brother's absence was very sadly rewarded, as I gradually came to realize the stern facts of the case, when later on, four men conveyed very gently from the rear part of that sleigh, a long, black covered box, which contained all that remained of our sacred loved one.

Later on I learned that he had taken ill a few hours after leaving home, and died as intimated, at his Uncle's home a few hundred miles distant, with rheumatic fever.

That was still another sad and mysterious Providence to a Mother who had just a few years previously, been bereft of a loving husband, and kind father to our family, who, under adverse circumstances, had been buried in another part of the country.

Just now, in this review of that grand experience of home, and loved ones, I again seem to see sweet faces like those of the purest angelic beings,

fluttering at the windows of my awakened memory, and as I listen, I also seem to hear sweet voices (hark; can you hear them) vibrating sentiments of love, that echo in my heart as far-away songs of affection and adoration, across the mute wastes of the immortal past.

Shall we gather at the river
Where bright angel's feet have trod,
With its crystal tide forever
Flowing by the throne of God.

Yes we will gather at the river,
The beautiful, the beautiful river,
Gather with the saints at the river
That flows by the throne of God.

